

[Joint Cttee. on Materials for Research,
American Council of Learned Societies
+
Social Science Research Council]

JOINT COMMITTEE ON MATERIALS FOR RESEARCH
OF THE
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES
AND THE
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

ROBERT C. BINKLEY, Secretary
Western Reserve University

NORMAN S. B. GRAS
Harvard University

OLON J. BUCK, Chairman
Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

WALDO G. LELAND
American Council of Learned Societies

H. M. LYDENBERG
New York Public Library

ARTHUR H. QUINN
University of Pennsylvania

CLARK WISSLER
American Museum of Natural History

May 13, 1931

Mr. Sydney P. Noe, Secretary
American Numismatic Society
156th Street and Broadway
New York City

Dear Sir:

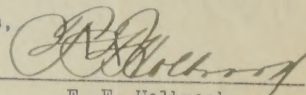
The above-named joint committee is making a general survey of the activities of American agencies in collecting, preserving, listing, and publishing materials for research in the fields of the social sciences and the humanities.

Could you give me an encyclopedic statement of the work of your institution if and in so far as its activities are designed thus to facilitate research, as distinguished from general reading, reference, or study, in the aforesaid fields? The following questions, broadly applicable to various classes of collecting agencies, will suggest more particularly the kind of information desired.

- {Are you developing a library open to the public?}*
1. What subjects, fields, or types of material are you emphasizing in the development of research collections? Some indication of the character and extent of your present holdings of research material would be welcome, but the emphasis should be on growing and projected collections and any special provision made for their development.
 2. Does the institution co-operate with any others of like purpose with a view of accomplishing jointly what one could not do alone, or of dividing the field of collection to avoid duplication?
 - omit* 3. Are you conducting any investigations or experiments, or employing other than generally recognized means, to prolong the life of such materials as newspapers, manuscripts, and maps, or to preserve the matter in them?
 4. What catalogues, lists, or other guides to materials for research in your collections or elsewhere have been or are being compiled or published by your institution?
 5. To what extent and through what mediums does the institution reproduce (in print, by photostat, or otherwise) source material as such?

An early and compendious reply would be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,


F. F. Holbrook
Investigator for the Committee
Historical Building, St. Paul

May 25, 1931.

F. F. Holbrook
Historical Building
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dear Sir:

Your circular of inquiry under date of May 18th, 1931 as to what this organization is doing in the way of facilitating research is at hand. I am very glad to reply in detail and should this response be insufficient or not entirely suited for your purposes please feel that I should be glad to have you permit me to be more specific.

In the first place almost all of the material in our museum is in the nature of a research collection and it is our constant effort to have this at the service of any qualified to use it. We frequently photograph the coins, medals or decorations in our possession and the only limit for the usefulness of what we have is the demands that are made upon us.

1 A. You ask if we are developing a library open to the public. The answer is, "Yes, most emphatically." This library consists of approximately 6000 volumes devoted to this subject almost exclusively and there is a supplementary file of pamphlets exceeding 5000 in number, as well as a very considerable file of auction catalogues of sales of coins and medals held in this country as well as abroad. Many of these catalogues are priced and the information available is very considerable. Further than this for the Greek coins we are developing a classified file which has been made by mounting the illustrations from auction catalogues in which Greek coins occurred. After mounting these illustrations and adding the weight of the piece the back is rubber stamped with the name of the collection from which it comes and in some cases with the price it brought at the auction. There are nearly 40,000 such cards in this file and as these are classified as to the city issuing the coins there is available for the student of that or any other city's coinage all of the material he would obtain by going through the collection of catalogues from which these illustrations have come. The saving of time will be obvious.

1 B. We can hardly be said to be emphasizing any specific field in the development of research collections. We are obliged to take advantage of the opportunities as they arise. It does follow, however, that when one of our members or visitors expresses an interest in a field in which we are a little weak that an attempt is made to remedy that weakness. As an illustration, it was pointed out to us several years ago that our section devoted to the "Bracteates" was far

May 25, 1931.

from strong. In the interval we have accumulated a considerable number of specimens which not only round out a showing of these pieces but we have added some rarities as well so that any student of the coinage of Medieval Germany would find in this collection material to keep him occupied for a considerable period.

2. We do cooperate with neighboring institutions but hardly to the extent that your question would imply. For example, one of the Art Museums in our city turns over to us Numismatic material that is without any artistic appeal, under an indefinite loan arrangement. We frequently aid other institutions in classifying their material, in an effort to have it placed on exhibition where it may do its part in educating any who will look at it.

4. With such small articles as coins, especially because of the great number of them it is impossible to publish a catalogue or list of this material available for research.

5. Much of our material is reproduced photographically. Occasionally we reproduce some of the pieces in plaster casts. Our library material can be reproduced photostatically if desired.

In closing it might be remarked that there is a growing recognition of the value of Numismatic material for illustrative purposes but as this growth replaces an almost complete ignorance of that value up to within a few years ago, it can hardly be considered of great magnitude as yet. The archaeologists use Numismatic material perhaps more than any other group - the historians far less than one would think might be the case. The economists are using the data to be derived from coins much more than previously but again the possibilities are apparently not even suspected by them.

Please feel that I shall be only too glad to have you send me any more specific questions in an effort to draw out any information that may be of value to you.

Very truly yours,

SN:JC

Secretary

P. S. Sections that are already strong and which would therefore offer considerable material for research workers are those of Oriental Coins (both near and far East) and coinages of the South American Republics. Our Medieval and Byzantine sections are weak - we hope to strengthen these as opportunity offers.

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CLARK WISSLER
American Museum of Natural History

May 29, 1931

Mr. Sydney P. Noe, Secretary
American Numismatic Society
Broadway between 155th and 156th Sts.
New York City

Dear Sir:

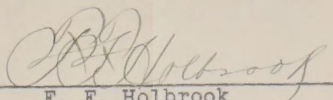
Thank you for your excellent statement of the activities of the American Numismatic Society.

One point that does not always have to be noted, and so is omitted in our questionnaire, wants clearing up, namely, the general scope of your collections.

Would it be correct to say that your society aims to gather and preserve examples of all available numismatic materials and literature, including coins, medals, and decorations, from all countries of the world and from the earliest times to the present? Also is there any general division of emphasis in collection as between coins in general use and those disappearing from or long since out of circulation?

To satisfy my own curiosity I would like to know how extensively you go in for medals and decorations, and ~~on~~ what determines their interest for you -- their variety, artistic design, purpose, personal associations, historic interest, or what not?

Very truly yours,



F. F. Holbrook
Investigator for the Committee
Historical Building, St. Paul

FFH/GH

June 1, 1931.

F. F. Holbrook
Historical Building
St. Paul, Minn.

Dear Sir:

Yours of May 29th is at hand. Your statement regarding the general scope of our collection is correct. There is no emphasis of one part of the collection at the expense of the other, although occasionally the interest of some member may stimulate collection along the line of his particular study.

As to medals and decorations, we try to obtain anything that we do not have and naturally we give some emphasis to things American. As for decorations, our collection is one of the most important on public exhibition anywhere. I trust this information will be of supplementary value.

Very cordially yours,

SN:JG

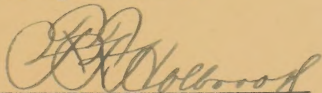
Secretary

Historical Building, St. Paul

6/5/31

Dear Mr. Nye:

For economy's sake, you will doubtless pardon this wholesale form of acknowledgment of assistance given in connection with the survey being made by the Joint Committee on Materials for Research of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.



Investigator for the committee



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

Mr. Sydney P. Noe, Secy.
Am. Nominations Society
Broadway betw. 155 & 156 Sts.,
New York City